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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Research Memorandum
INR-3, January 24, 1964

To : The Acting Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - George C. Denney, Jr. *h.c.d.*

Subject: Castro's Second Visit to Moscow: History Repeats Itself

Although the Cuban leader's second trip to Moscow^{1/} was carried out in circumstances that imparted a sense of urgency, the known outcome of the visit has produced no striking results and its real impact may depend on subsequent events. This report discusses Castro's trip

ABSTRACT

The Soviet agreement to purchase increasing amounts of Cuban sugar at a favorable price for a six-year period represented the one readily apparent benefit which Castro obtained during his January 13-23 visit. At the same time, this Soviet concession appears to oblige the Castro regime to concentrate on development of agriculture -- specifically a one-crop economy -- at the expense of more ambitious plans for industrial development and aggressive foreign policy goals.

It is clear that military relations were discussed, but any decisions taken were not made known. The participation in the talks of Cuba's artillery commander suggests that one topic may have been

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1. For an analysis of the first trip, see RSB-87, June 12, 1963.

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Soviet turnover to the Cubans of the SAM system and withdrawal from Cuba of Soviet personnel manning them.

There was no significant change in public statements on Moscow's commitment to defend Cuba if it is invaded; but the emphatic endorsement of the Havana regime as a bona fide communist one underscored Moscow's obligation to sustain it politically, economically, and militarily.

The very demonstration of Soviet-Cuban solidarity manifested by the visit is a boost to Moscow in the current stage of the Sino-Soviet conflict. This appears to be Moscow's major gain. However, there is nothing in the published accounts of the visit to provide a clear indication that the Castro regime has abandoned its neutralist position in the Sino-Soviet struggle. In fact, the Castro regime's sympathies for Communist China's outlook on many issues could again lead it, as in the period since the last visit, to adopt a seemingly pro-Peiping stance.

The joint communique reflected Moscow's desire for a Castro "normalization" of relations with the US and for a moderate communist strategy in Latin America. A moderate expression of support for Panama's demands vis-a-vis the US was the only specific statement of the communist outlook on Latin American problems apart from Cuba.

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It is, of course, possible that the absence of detailed discussion of the Latin American situation is a disguise for Soviet-Cuban agreement -- prompted by Panamanian events, developments favorable to the communist cause in Africa, and pressures from the Chinese Communists -- on a more forward communist strategy in Latin America that would still stop short of bringing on US intervention.

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Circumstances of the Visit

Castro's second trip to the Soviet Union followed by almost exactly six months his lengthy -- and unprecedented for any communist leader -- six-week visit to the USSR last April-June. The period between the two visits was characterized by renewed evidence of friction in Soviet-Cuban relations as a result of several factors: the Cuban regime growing concern over continuing pressures against it in the Caribbean despite the relaxation of Soviet-US tensions following conclusion of the nuclear test ban treaty; Soviet dissatisfaction at Cuba's neutral position in the ever-sharpening Sino-Soviet conflict; and numerous reports of Soviet-Cuban mutual dissatisfaction over economic relations (on Havana's part, discontent over the level of Soviet assistance, and on Moscow's part, over the high cost of the aid and the poor use to which it was being put). Soviet leader Podgornyy's extensive two-week inspection tour of the island on the eve of Castro's second visit attested to the importance of this latter factor.

Concern over these major problems for Soviet-Cuban relations was sharpened by uncertainties over the policies to be pursued by the new US administration, and by such Caribbean developments as discovery of the sizeable arms cache in Venezuela traceable to Cuban origin and the violent anti-US demonstrations in Panama, both of which raised troublesome questions of communist strategy in Latin America for Havana and Moscow. Finally, the Castro trip was made at the very time at which Khrushchev had reportedly planned to carry out his promised visit to Cuba.

Thus, the Cuban leader's arrival in Moscow January 13 for a 10-day visit was probably occasioned by a strongly felt need on the part of both parties for a major effort to overcome their differences and mutual problems. The joint Soviet-Cuban communique published January 22 proclaimed a full identity of views and asserted that the two parties' discussions had covered Soviet-Cuban relations, international communist affairs, and foreign policy problems. It was much less clear what firm agreements, if any, had been made on many of these questions.

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Soviet-Cuban Relations

Economic Relations. The one readily apparent benefit, tangible or otherwise, which Castro received from the Soviets was a long-term agreement on the purchase of increasing amounts of Cuban sugar at a stabilized price. The new Soviet-Cuban trade agreement provides for the "long development of the Cuban economy." It gives Cuba an income from the Soviet purchases, and the Soviet willingness to absorb increasing quantities of Cuban sugar could slow the anticipated decline of world sugar prices after 1964. The pact assumes Cuban ability to raise sugar output to 10 million tons by 1970 and provides for Soviet sugar purchases at 6 cents a pound during 1965-70, rising from 2.1 million to 5 million tons. By putting a floor under Cuban export earnings, the Soviets shore up Cuba's creditworthiness in the free world.

The sugar-purchase agreement, as well as pronouncements during the visit, reflected Soviet concern over Cuba's terms of trade and balance of payments during the rest of the 1960's. By underwriting Cuba's import capacity, the Soviets indirectly provide assistance for economic development. The communique put in Castro's mouth the assertion first made by Khrushchev at the Kremlin reception January 21 to the effect that the Cuban Government was now concentrating its major efforts on tasks of economic reconstruction. Thus Moscow appears to be pressing the Havana regime to concentrate on domestic economic tasks -- and development of a one crop economy at that. It is by no means assured that the Cubans will be successful.

Military Relations. It is a virtual certainty that military relations were discussed, but unclear what decisions, if any, were reached.

As during last summer's visit, Defense Minister Marshal Malinovskiy participated in the Soviet leadership's talks with Castro. In addition, Marshal Grechko, Deputy Defense Minister and Warsaw Pact Commander, also took part in the talks. From Castro's side, Major Pedro Miret, until recently the commander of Cuban artillery and now possibly involved with the Soviet surface-to-air (SAM) missiles, was a member of the Cuban leader's entourage.

It seems likely that agreement may have been finalized on the turnover of Soviet weapons remaining in Cuba, and especially the SAM missile system which the Cubans will be prepared to operate in a few months. The communique noted that the Cubans possessed "modern military equipment which is quickly being assimilated by

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the personnel of the Cuban army." In his January 17 speech at a mass meeting in Kalinin, Khrushchev openly boasted of the modern Soviet military equipment on parade in Havana January 2.

Soviet Commitment To Defend Cuba. On this issue, the joint communique merely repeated the Soviet-Cuban statement of last May 23 to the effect that if the US violated its alleged obligations not to invade Cuba and attacked it, "the Soviet Union will fulfill its international duty toward the fraternal Cuban people and will render them the necessary aid for the defense of the freedom and independence of the Republic of Cuba by all means at its disposal." The present communique was in fact less threatening than last May's statement since it did not repeat the latter's assertion that "an invasion of Cuba would confront mankind with a destructive rocket-thermonuclear war."

If concern for Cuba's security and a desire for a firmer Soviet commitment was a major preoccupation of Castro's -- and such appears to have been the case -- he must have come away from Moscow disappointed.

Communist Relations. The Castro visit emphasized once again Moscow's complete endorsement of the Havana regime as a bona fide communist one, with all the implications this has for Moscow's commitment to sustain it politically, economically, and militarily.

Negotiations were conducted on a party as well as a government level; the joint communique noted with satisfaction the "truly fraternal relations" existing between the Soviet Party and the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS); Castro was consistently referred to as "Comrade" and praised as the leader of the PURS; and the communique hailed the Cuban regime as the harbinger of communism on the American continent.

Khrushchev Visit in Doubt. The communique made no mention of a Khrushchev visit to Cuba, agreed to during Castro's stay in the USSR last year. Thus, not only the timing but the visit itself seems to be in question. The Soviets may have desired an indefinite postponement of the visit in order not to aggravate relations with the new US administration.

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Sino-Soviet Conflict

It is not clear whether the Soviets managed to induce Castro to abandon his neutral stance in the Sino-Soviet conflict. The very demonstration of Soviet-Cuban solidarity evidenced by the visit is itself useful to the Soviets as a symbol of Moscow's leading role in world communism, which is being constantly challenged by the Chinese.

However, the general foreign policy and international communist precepts to which Castro subscribed in the communique -- "Leninist peaceful coexistence" and communist unity -- are fully acceptable to the Chinese. Castro's indirect endorsement of the nuclear test ban treaty, while contrasting with Peiping's bitter attacks on the treaty, was less wholehearted than previous Cuban comment. Without specifically mentioning the treaty, the communique noted Cuba's endorsement of Moscow's "success" in struggling for a cessation of nuclear tests (Peiping also favors a complete cessation of nuclear tests!) which, combined with the agreement not to launch vehicles carrying nuclear weapons into space, was welcomed as "a step" toward peace and disarmament.

On communist affairs, Castro expressed his approval of the measures taken by the USSR to "liquidate existing disagreements" and strengthen communist unity. Yet the current conciliatory measures Moscow is taking in the Sino-Soviet conflict are a result primarily of Soviet failure to win international communist support for stronger measures against Peiping; so Castro support of this tactic could be as much an admonition to the Soviet leadership as a demonstration of solidarity. The one passage in the communique indicating possible Cuban support for some future Soviet action against the Chinese was contained in that portion which reiterated international communist principles of conduct and condemned factional activity in the international communist movement. This latter principle is one which the Chinese have refused to accept on the grounds that it creates a supranational communist authority, deprives the individual communist parties of their due sovereignty and, above all, is aimed against them.

It remains questionable, however, whether the condemnation of factionalism presages a future Soviet action such as excommunication of Peiping or is simply more verbiage attacking the Chinese. The curt phrase in the communique that the sides "exchanged opinion" on urgent questions of the world communist movement also suggests something less than full agreement on the question of Communist China.

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In sum, there seems little evidence of Castro's abandonment of his neutral position in the Sino-Soviet conflict, although the visit itself was a temporary boost for Soviet prestige vis-à-vis the Chinese Communists. Furthermore, the more important issue is how the Cubans will react in the future to international developments affecting their vital interests. The record of the past, as well as the psychology and circumstances of the Cuban regime, indicate it will react in the more militant fashion identifying it with the Chinese Communists. If so, the Soviet-Cuban rapprochement achieved in the present communique will again be damaged.

Foreign Policy Implications

The views on foreign policy expressed during the visit indicate that Moscow continues to urge greater moderation on the Cuban regime, but it remains to be seen whether the Soviets achieved any lasting success in this endeavor.

Relations with the US. In contrast to the May 1963 statement, the joint communique expressed Castro's willingness to "establish good-neighborly relations" with the US -- an intention also endorsed by Khrushchev. The communique noted a certain easing of international tension recently, but both leaders blamed "bellicose militarist circles" in the US for tensions in the Caribbean and "an aggressive policy toward Cuba." Singling out US economic pressures, intervention and attempts to unite Latin Americans against Cuba, the communique implied that US policy must change if the normalization of relations is to take place.

The Soviets also evidenced concern over the new US administration's willingness to observe a commitment not to invade Cuba, and implied that Moscow would reintroduce offensive weapons there should the commitment not be observed. In his speech at Kalinin, Khrushchev said: "The agreement with the Government of the United States remains in force today and we adhere to our promise while the agreement is observed."

Like the May 1963 statement, the communique reiterated the Soviet Government's support for Castro's five demands as the basis for a normalization of relations with the US. Unlike that statement, however, the communique did not spell out the five demands, which include cessation of intrusions into Cuban waters and airspace and US abandonment of the Guantanamo base. The communique did not repeat recent Soviet public references to overflights and Guantanamo.

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Communist Strategy in Latin America. Unlike the May 1963 statement, which discussed at length communist strategy for achieving power and expressly endorsed the Havana declarations setting forth Cuban views on this question, the joint communique had almost nothing to say on the subject. Possibly this reflected Moscow's effort to induce Castro to concentrate on domestic affairs and moderate his foreign policy conduct.

Regarding Latin America specifically, the communique merely expressed both sides' support for the struggle of Afro-Asian and Latin American states to strengthen their independence -- i.e., curtail their relations with the West. Panama was the only Latin American country to receive specific mention. Panama probably figured prominently in the Khrushchev-Castro talks. One of the consequences, perhaps fortuitous, of the visit was to remove Castro temporarily from the Caribbean, where his very presence tends to be incriminating. Both sides endorsed Panama's right to a revision or abrogation of the 1903 treaty with the US.

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Summary and Conclusions

At the time of the Castro visit's termination, the underlying motivation, if there was a single one, remains largely a matter of speculation. The Soviets and Cubans have ample major problems to discuss, but it is difficult to see why they could not be handled on the level of the Soviet delegation headed by N.V. Podgornyy -- one of the top six Soviet leaders -- which spent two weeks in Cuba, unless some major crisis and/or decision was in the making. The published results of the Castro visit provide no clear evidence of any major problem, and even less of a significant initiative or decision.

Nevertheless the circumstances of the visit and the coincidence of other events, notably in Panama, strongly suggest that much more significant discussions took place than meet the eye in the joint communique. These discussions probably revolved on the question of how best to take advantage of the opportunities presented to Cuba and the USSR by developments in Panama and elsewhere in Latin America without generating a violent US counteraction.

Moscow probably used Panamanian events to argue that too overt a Cuban involvement was not really necessary, that the spur to anti-American feeling throughout Latin America in the wake of Panama would work to Cuba advantage as long as Havana did not intervene so blatantly as to drive the Latin American countries back into Washington's arms or generate US actions against Cuba.

Moscow also probably does not want to jeopardize the growing possibilities of Cuban economic relations with Western Europe, which are useful to Moscow for their divisive effect on US relations with the countries involved and for the extent to which they ease the Soviet economic burden in Cuba. The sugar agreement, the recent failure of Cuban efforts in Venezuela, and current Cuban apprehensions about the intentions of the Johnson administration, may have been sufficient to induce Castro to accept the Soviet position for the time being. Accordingly, the purpose of the joint communique was to set forth a public position which would be designed to reassure the US and forestall any drastic actions on its part.

At the same time, once limits were agreed on with respect to the directness of Cuban involvement in Latin American revolutions, Khrushchev and Castro might have been able to come to agreement -- naturally not included in their communique -- about a wide range of activities short

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of generating US countermoves in Latin America. The inclusion in Castro's entourage of Major Aldo Santamaria, reputed chief of the Cuban regime's guerrilla warfare program, is suggestive in this regard. The scheduling of a pro-Panama rally in Havana in the next few days indicates Soviet agreement at least to stepped up Cuban propaganda support.

Like previous Soviet-Cuban agreements, the solidity of the current accord will depend on events. It was only a few months after Khrushchev thought he had achieved Cuban agreement to Soviet foreign policy positions that Castro embarrassed him by refusing to sign the test-ban agreement. The different outlooks of the two men, and the different imperatives of both countries, will probably lead to continuing problems in deciding the specific tactics in concrete situations. It is difficult to foresee to what extent such problems might be resolved within the framework of any present Soviet-Cuban agreement on revolutionary strategy in Latin America.

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